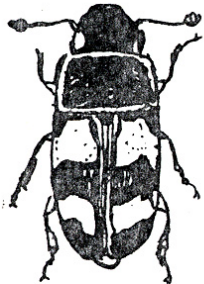


Sap Beetle

Family: Nitidulidae

Injury. Sap beetles bore into fruits about picking time, and are especially attracted to overripe fruits. They are more destructive on tomatoes where the beetles bore into the fruit through cracks or any damaged area on the tomato fruit. In table corn, sap beetles are particularly noticeable on ears where there has been bird damage or where corn borers or corn earworms have been feeding. In the cornfield, if they are plentiful, they may enter by the silk on previously undamaged cobs. The sap beetles do not do the primary damage, but feed on the sap exuding from damaged tissue. They do not bite or sting.

In some instances, these beetles have caused severe damage by contaminating fruit and vegetables especially raspberries, tomatoes and table corn. Most sap beetles are found where plant fluids are fermenting or souring as they are attracted to the odors of such things as ripe fruit, prepared food, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and fresh paint.



I = actual size

Description. Most sap beetles are small, 12 mm in length or less, and generally elongate or oval. Members of this family vary considerably in size, shape and habits. Our most common sap beetle, also called the picnic beetle and the four-spotted sap beetle, is a small dark beetle about 1/4 inch long with two yellow spots on each wing cover.

Management. Populations around homes and picnic areas are difficult to control. A spray of either the insecticide carbaryl (Sevin), Baygon or malathion to lawns or picnic places will reduce the numbers of beetles present. However, food odors will attract more beetles from surrounding places.

Fruits should be picked and moved from the field as soon as possible to prevent over ripening. Unmarketable fruits should be discarded rather than leaving them on the ground. If beetles are plentiful, a spray of malathion may be tried. Malathion may be applied within one day of harvest.

On tomatoes, the use of chemicals would be ineffective as the beetles do not feed on foliage or attack undamaged tomatoes on the vine. Reducing the numbers of cracked and squashed tomatoes will help with control. With table corn, the elimination of damage to the cobs by control of corn borers and corn earworms will substantially reduce the number of sap beetles. Further reduction will occur if birds are scared from the fields.

